

Original.

B E E T H O V E N . *

A TALE OF ART.

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PART I.

If, dear reader, you have never been so happy as to travel through the beautiful country of the Rhine, I wish from my heart you may speedily have that pleasure; for truly, he who has not seen that unrivalled land, with its pretty villages and its noble cities, its smiling villas and vineyards, and romantic ruined castles—its lordly Rhine, the father of all—nor heard the cheerful songs of its peasants, laboring in the vineyards, cannot know how dear and lovely is our native Germany!

If you have been there, dear reader, it follows as a matter of course, that you left not unvisited the venerable cathedral. And how solemn and strange the feeling that filled your heart, when entering, for the first time, beneath the shadow of those lofty, twilight arches! An awful stillness prevailed around, and speaking pictures looked forth upon you; then as you advanced, streams of softened light came downward from the arched windows of the gigantic nave! The organ was heard; a low, distant murmur, swelling louder and higher, 'till, rising into powerful harmony, the "Gloria" burst forth! then, overpowered by emotion, rapt in contemplation of the unspeakable greatness of Deity—conscious of the feebleness of man—you could but kneel and adore!

At least, so it was with me—and often so—when a youth. I have listened to that music, heard it from beginning to end, then rushed down from the choir, to throw myself prostrate on the marble pavement, and weep tears of joy! Were not Heaven and earth my own? Did I not see them in their holiest loveliness? Heard I not enraptured, their thousand thousand voices—from the sweet murmuring of the flowers, to the awe-inspiring thunder-peal? Understood I not the mysterious harmony of all I saw and heard?

Alas! those years of enthusiasm are flown; the harmony is broken! The flowers that mark the coming of spring, have no longer a voice for me; the startling thunder, that once spoke of the sunshine and beauty about to succeed the short-lived storm—has no significance; even the tones of that magnificent music fail to lift my soul to the height of devotion, inspiring her to mingle her adoration with the world-wide hymn of praise! My heart is hard and cold; but seldom roused, and relapsing into deadness when the brief excitement is over. I am older even in feeling than in years. I shun the merry company of men; I shudder at their jests—their careless hearts—their jovial faces; for they seem to me like shadows—gibbering forms—that mockingly repeat the tones of life. Enough of myself; how prone are we to run into egotism! Let me rather amuse the reader by some reminiscences of a gifted individual, whose fame is linked with the scenes I have spoken of.

* From the German of Lyser.

T H E B O Y .

It was a mild October afternoon, in the year 1784. A boat was coming down the Rhine, close to that point where the fair city of Bonn sits on its left shore. The company on board, consisted of old and young persons, of both sexes, returning from an excursion of pleasure.

The sun was sinking in the west, and touched the mountain summits, castle crowned, with gold and purple, as the boat came to the shore not far from the city. The company landed, full of gaiety and mirth, the young people walking on before, while their seniors followed, as happy as they, though more thoughtful, and less noisy. They adjourned to a public garden, close on the river side, to finish the day of social enjoyment by partaking of a collation. Old and young were seated, ere long, around the stone table set under the large trees. The crimson faded in the west; the moon poured her soft light, glimmering through the leafy canopy above them, and was reflected in full beauty in the waters of the Rhine.

The merriment of the guests was at its height; the wine sparkled, and lively toasts were drunk, in which the youngsters joined as gleefully as their elders.

"Your boys are right merry fellows," said a benevolent-looking old gentleman, addressing Herr von Beethoven, a tenor singer in the Electoral Chapel; pointing, at the same time, to his two sons—lads of ten and fourteen years of age. "They will certainly turn out something clever," he continued, laughing, as he watched their pranks; "but tell me, Beethoven, why do you not take Louis with you, when you indulge the children with a party of pleasure?"

"Because," answered the person he addressed, "because Louis is a stubborn, dogged, stupid boy, whose troublesome behavior would only spoil our mirth."

"Ah!" returned the old gentleman, "you are always finding fault with the poor lad, and perhaps impose too hard tasks upon him! I see you are more indulgent to the others. It is no wonder he becomes dull and obstinate; nay, I am only surprized that he has not, ere this, broken loose from your sharp control."

"My dear Simrock," replied Beethoven, laughing, "I have a remedy at hand for such humors—my good Spanish cane, which, you see, is of the toughest! Louis is well acquainted with its excellent properties, and stands in wholesome awe thereof! And trust me, neighbor, I know best what is for the boy's good. He has talent, and must be taught to cultivate it; but he will never go to work properly, unless I drive out some of his capricious notions, and set his head right."

"Ah, Johann!" interposed Madame von Beethoven, "you do not know the boy! He has the best and most docile of dispositions, if you only manage him in the proper way."

"The proper way," repeated the father; "and so I must coax and cajole him, and ask his leave humbly to give him a word of instruction!"

"No, certainly; only grant him the same indulgences you allow to his brothers."

"He is not like Carl and Johann," was the muttered answer; "they ought not to be treated alike."

"Nay, nay, neighbor," said Simrock, earnestly.

"Let us talk no more about it," interrupted Beethoven; "I know well what I am doing; and my reasons are satisfactory to myself. *These* boys are a comfort to me; a couple of fine lads; I need hardly ever speak to them, for they are ready to spring at a glance; they always obey me with alacrity and affection. Louis, on the other hand, has been bearish from his infancy. I have never sought to rule him by fear, but only to drive out a little of his sulkiness now and then; yet nothing avails. When his brothers joke with him, as all boys will sometimes, he usually quits the room murmuring; and it is easy to see he would fain beat them if he were not afraid of me. As to his studies, music is the only thing he will learn—I mean with good will; or, if he consents to apply himself to any thing else, I must first knock it into him that it has something to do with music. *Then* he will go to work, but it is his humor not to do it otherwise! If I give him a commission to execute for me, the most arrant clodpole could not be more stupid about it."

"Let him alone, then, to live for his favorite art," said Herr Simrock. "It is often the case that the true artist is a fool in matters of every day life."

"Those are silly fancies," answered Beethoven, again laughing. "Helen is always talking so. The true artist is as much a man as others, and proves himself so; will thrive like the rest of the world, and take care of his family. I know all about it; money—money's the thing! I mean Louis to do well; and that he may learn to do well, I spare not trouble—nor the rod either, when it is necessary! The boy will live to thank me for my pains."

Here the conversation was interrupted, and the subject was not resumed. The hours flew lightly by; it struck nine, and the festive company separated, to return to their homes.

Carl and Johann were in high glee as they went home; they sprang up the steps before their father, and pulled the door bell. The door was opened, and a boy about twelve years old stood in the entry, with a lamp in his hand. He was short and stout for his age; but a sickly paleness, more strongly marked by the contrast of his thick black hair, was observable on his face. His small grey eyes were quick and restless in their movement, very piercing when he fixed them on any object, but softened by the shade of his long dark lashes; his mouth was delicately formed, and the compression of the lips betrayed both pride and sorrow. It was Louis Beethoven.

"Where are my father and mother?" asked he.

"Hallo, nightcap!" cried Carl, laughing, "is it you? Cannot you open your eyes? They are just behind us!"

Without answering his brother, Louis came to meet his parents, and bade them "good evening."

His mother greeted him affectionately; his father

said, while the boy busied himself fastening the door—

"Well, Louis, I hope you have finished your task?"

"I have, father."

"Very good; to-morrow I will look and see if you have earned your breakfast." So saying, the elder Beethoven went into his chamber; his wife followed him, after bidding her sons good night, Louis, more tenderly than any of them. Carl and Johann withdrew with their brother to their common sleeping apartment, entertaining him with a description of their day of festivity. "Now, Louis," said little Johann, as they finished their account, "if you had not been such a dunce, our father would have taken you along; but he says he thinks that you will be little better than a dunce all the days of your life—and self-willed and stubborn besides."

"Don't talk about that any more!" answered Louis, "but come to bed!"

"Yes, you are always a sleepy head!" cried they both, laughing; but in a few moments after getting into bed, both were asleep, and snoring heartily.

Louis took the lamp from the table, left the apartment softly, and went up-stairs to an attic chamber, where he was wont to retire when he wished to be out of the way of his teasing brothers. He had fitted up the little room for himself as well as his means permitted. A table with three legs, a leathern chair, the bottom partly out, and an old piano, which he had rescued from the possession of rats and mice, made up the furniture; and here, in company with his beloved violin, he was accustomed to pass his happiest hours. He was passionately fond of solitude, and nothing would have better pleased him, than permission to take long walks in the country, where he could hear the murmur of streams and the rustling of foliage, and the surging of the winds on the mountains. But he had not that liberty. His only recreation was to pass a few hours here in his favorite pursuit, indulging his fantasies and reveries, undisturbed by his noisy brothers, or his strict father's reproof.

The boy felt, young as he was, that he was not understood by one of his family, not even excepting his mother. She loved him tenderly, and always took his part when his father found fault with him; but she never knew what was passing in his mind, because he never uttered it. How could he, shy and inexperienced, clothe in words what was burning in his bosom—what was perpetually striving after a language more intense and expressive than human speech? But his genius was not long to be unappreciated.

The next morning a messenger came from the Elector, to Beethoven's house, bringing an order for him to repair immediately to the palace, and fetch with him his son, Louis. The father was surprised; not more so than the boy, whose heart beat with undefined apprehension as they entered the princely mansion. A servant was in waiting, and conducted them without delay, or further announcement, to the presence of the Elector, who was attended by two gentlemen.

The Elector received old Beethoven with great kindness, and said, "We have heard much, recently, of the extraordinary musical talent of your son, Louis. Have

you brought him along with you?" Beethoven replied in the affirmative, stepped back to the door, and bade the boy come in.

"Come nearer, my little lad!" cried the Elector, graciously; "do not be shy. This gentleman here, is our new court organist—Herr Neefe; the other is the famous composer, Herr Yunker, from Cologne. We promised them both they should hear you play something; and think you may venture upon a tune before them. The late Master Von Eden always spoke well of you."

"Yes, he was pleased with me!" murmured the boy, softly. The Prince smiled, and bade him take his seat and begin. He sat down himself in a large easy chair. Louis went to the piano, and without examining the pile of notes that lay awaiting his selection, played a short piece; then a light and graceful melody, which he executed with such ease and spirit—nay, in so admirable a manner, that his distinguished auditors could not forbear expressing their surprise, and even his father was struck. When he left off playing, the Elector arose, came up to him, laid his hand on his head, and said encouragingly—

"Well done, my boy! we are pleased with you! Now, Master Yunker," turning to the gentleman on his right hand, "what say you?"

"Your Highness!" answered the composer, "I will venture to say the lad has had considerable practice with that last air, to execute it so well."

Louis burst into a laugh at this remark; the others looked surprised and grave; his father darted an angry glance at him, and the boy, conscious that he had done something wrong became instantly silent.

The Elector laughed himself at the comical scene. "And pray what are you laughing at, my little fellow?" asked he.

The boy colored and looked down as he replied, "Because Herr Yunker thinks I have learned the air by heart, when it occurred to me but just now while I was playing."

"Then," returned the composer, "if you really improvised that piece, you ought to go through at sight a *Motiv* I will give you presently."

"Let me try," answered Louis.

"If his Gracious Highness will permit me," said the composer.

Permission was granted. Yunker wrote down on paper a difficult *Motiv*, and handed it to the boy. Louis read it over carefully, and immediately began to play it according to the rules of counterpoint. The composer listened attentively—his astonishment increased at every turn in the music; and when at last it was finished, in a manner so spirited as to surpass his expectations, his eyes sparkled, and he looked on the lad with keen interest, as the possessor of a genius rarely to be found.

"If he goes on in this way," said he in a low tone to the Elector, "I can assure your Highness that a very great counterpointist may be made out of him."

Neefe observed with a smile, "I agree with the master; but it seems to me the boy's style inclines rather too much to the gloomy and the melancholy."

"It is well," replied his Highness, smiling, "be it your care that it does not become too much so, Herr von Beethoven," he continued, addressing the father; "we take an interest in your son; and it is our pleasure that he complete the studies commenced under your tuition, under that of Herr Neefe. He may come to live with him after to-day. We will take care that he wants for nothing; and his further advancement, also, shall be cared for. You are willing, Louis, to come and live with this gentleman?"

The boy's eyes were fixed on the ground; he raised them, and glanced first at Neefe and then at his father. The offer was a tempting one; he would fare better and have more liberty in his new abode. But there was his *father!* whom he had always loved, who, spite of his severity, had doubtless loved him, and now stood looking upon him earnestly and sadly. He hesitated no longer, but seizing Beethoven's hand and pressing it to his heart, he cried, "No! no! I cannot leave my father."

"You are a good and dutiful lad," said his Highness. "Well, I will not ask you to leave your father, who must be very fond of you. You shall live with him and come and take your lessons of Herr Neefe; that is our will. Adieu! Herr von Beethoven."

From this time Louis lived a new life. His father treated him no longer with harshness, and even reproved his brothers when they tried to tease him. Carl and Johann grew shy of him, however, when they saw what a favorite he had become. Louis found himself no longer restrained, but came and went as he pleased; he took frequent excursions in the country, which he enjoyed with more than youthful pleasure, when the lessons were over.

His worthy master was astonished at the rapid progress of his pupil in his beloved art. "But, Louis," said he, one day, "if you would become a great musician, you must not neglect every thing besides music. You must acquire foreign languages, particularly Latin, Italian, and French. These are all necessary, that you may know what learned men have said and written upon the art. You must not fancy all this knowledge is to come to you of itself; you must be diligent and devote yourself to study, and be sure of being well repaid in the end. For without such cultivation you can never excel in music; nay, even genius, left to itself, is but little better than blind impulse. Would you leave your name to posterity as a true artist, make your own all that bears relation to your art."

Louis promised, and kept his word. In the midst of his playing he would leave off, however much it cost him, if the hour struck for his lessons in the languages. So closely he applied himself, that in a year's time he was tolerably well acquainted, not only with Latin, French, and Italian, but also with the English. His father marvelled at his progress not a little; for years he had labored in vain, with starvation and blows, to make the boy learn the first principles of those languages. He had never, indeed, taken the trouble to explain to him their use in the acquisition of the science of music.

In 1765 appeared Louis's first sonatas. They dis-

played uncommon talent, and gave promise that the youthful artist would in future accomplish something great, though scarcely yet could be found in them a trace of that gigantic genius, whose death forty years afterward filled all Europe with sorrow.

The best understanding was now established between father and son; and the lad's natural generosity and warmth of heart being unchecked by undue severity, his kindly feelings overflowed upon all around him. This disposition to love his friends, and to enjoy life, remained with the artist to the end of his days. The benevolent master Simrock was much pleased at his good fortune, and withal somewhat surprized, for spite of his compassionate espousal of the boy's cause, he looked upon Louis rather as a dull fellow. Now his opinion was quite changed; and to show his good will he sent him several presents, and insisted on his coming frequently to his lodgings, to drink a glass of Rhonish in company with his old friend.

"We were both mistaken in the lad," he would say to old Beethoven; "he abounds in wit and odd fancies, but I do not altogether like his mixing up in his music all sorts of strange conceits; the best way, to my notion, is a plain one. Let him follow the great Mozart, step by step; after all, he is the only one, and there is none to come up to him—none!" And Louis's father, who also idolized Mozart, always agreed with his neighbor in his judgment, and echoed—"None!"

Thus the summer flew by; the foliage grow yellow and began to fall. Our young hero delighted—as what poetical soul does not?—in communion with nature. He wandered often in the woods, and welcomed the autumn breezes that scattered the yellow leaves at his feet. I have always found a pleasant melancholy in my walks at this season, when the slant rays of the sun gleam upon dismantled trees, and the wealth of summer lies on the ground; when the winds sigh through the desolate branches, or the ear is startled by the woodman's stroke, or perhaps the winding of the hunter's horn.

Let none despair of himself to whom heaven has granted the power of enjoying the beauty of Nature! In her maternal bosom is consolation for every woe! He is her favored child; doth he weep over blighted hopes or crushed affections—unreproved his tears flow, and amid silence and solitude, in the calm wood, he hears angel voices that mourn with him, while from the stars far up in heaven comes down a whisper of consolation, "Life is brief, and frail and changeful is the heart of man; but Love is infinite—eternal; thou hast friends that know no change; look above, and hope!" And with the coming sun that wakes to life such myriads of happy creatures, shall new strength and hope visit his soul. But alas for thee! child of sorrow, if thou hearest not that kind healing voice; if night is starless to thine eyes—ere ceases thy heart to break! Could life arise for thee from the dead, thou wouldst still be wretched, wouldst still stand alone and uncared for—kept but by Divine compassion from despair.

Enjoy while thou canst, oh, youthful enthusiast! the

luxury of thy being—the beauty around thee! Think'st thou 'tis but, after all, a lovely dream? No—'tis a fair reality, still more fleeting than a dream! Dreams may return to enchant us; realities that are past, never!

The first lasting sorrow that befel Louis was the loss of his father. Beethoven's health failed at the beginning of winter. Ere long his physician pronounced him beyond hope. By his own request his family were informed that his end was near. Helen and her two sons, Carl and Johann, received the intelligence with loud lamentations; Louis said not a word, but his grief was no less acute.

At night the afflicted family gathered round the bed of the dying. "My Louis!" said Beethoven, faintly. The boy was kneeling by the bed, pale as the sick man himself. He clasped his father's cold hand and pressed it to his lips, but could not speak for tears.

"God's best blessings be upon you, my son!" said his parent. "Promise me that throughout life you will never forsake your brothers; I know they have not loved you as they ought; that is partly my fault; promise me that whatever may happen, you will continue to regard and cherish them."

"I will—I will, dear father!" cried Louis, sobbing. Beethoven pressed his hand in token of satisfaction. The same night he expired. The grief of Louis was unbounded. It was a bitter thing thus to lose a parent just as the ties of nature were strengthened by mutual appreciation and confidence; but it was necessary that he should rouse himself to minister support and comfort to his suffering mother.

The first keenness of his sorrow was blunted by time; and he returned with renewed diligence to his studies. His mother often remonstrated against his pursuit of them with such absorbing eagerness. "You will injure your health, my beloved son," she would say. But he would answer cheerfully, "Be not uneasy, dear mother; the winter will soon be past, and when spring comes I will relax my labors."

Louis was now in his eighteenth year; and the period was memorable in his life. A young kinswoman of his mother, whose parents lived in Cologne, came on a visit to Bonn. Adelaide was a beautiful, sprightly girl. Louis saw her, and it seemed to him that all his previous existence was but a void, and that his real being had but just begun. He was conscious of a thousand new perceptions and thought he had never before felt or seen what was in the world. Nature had now charms for him; he had capacities for joy before undreamed of. As for music, 'till now, it seemed to him the spirit of art had slumbered within him. How magnificent was her awakening! The magic name of Adelaide, her voice, her smile, called his genius into full life, and he felt that he had power to do as he had never done.

First love! Is it not a misnomer? for but *once* can the heart bow to the all-subduing influence? Once cold can it ever be warmed again to that bright luxuriance of life and feeling? And how soon does the tender flower born of *fantasy*, wither in the breath of reality—never to bloom again! Memory of the lost paradise

alone remains ; it is well if there remains not also the saddest fruit of disappointment—a sceptical scorn of all that seems winning and lovely. Happy he whom fate deprives of the object of his love before the sweet delusion is over ! No words can paint his heartfelt anguish at the loss. But one bliss is left him ; the image of the beloved is still robed in its magic charms ; his faith in his ideal is still unshaken. His heart has never proved the bitterest pang.

For a time our youthful hero was the happiest of the happy, for he yielded his soul to the sway of love, and music was its appropriate language. But Adelaide understood him not ; how should she ? His eyes indeed spoke a passion deeper than words could reveal ; his melodies were of a bolder and higher, yet a tenderer cast ; but it was only in the silence of his own apartment, when he sat playing alone, that these signs of emotion might have been discovered. In her presence he sought not to paint in language his devoted love ; it was enough for him to look upon her, to watch her graceful movements, to listen to her voice. That was inspiration enough, he wished not for more.

The fair sex are not usually pleased with this species of mute homage ; all maidens are not Ceciliæ ; most of them prefer a lover bold enough to venture on an open confession of their power to charm. The fair dream Louis indulged was ere long to be rudely broken. I am not going to give the reader a melancholy love tale ; suffice it to say the boy's passion became known to his brother, Carl, and one evening he chanced to overhear a conversation between him and Adelaide. Carl was telling his cousin of Louis' love for her, and laughing at his simplicity in never dreaming of declaring it. Adelaide laughed heartily at her "unsophisticated lover," as she called him, saying she had never suspected such a thing—that she could not help pitying the poor boy—yet was half inclined to draw him out, it was such a capital joke ! Carl joined in her merriment, and the two concerted a scheme for their own amusement at the expense of poor Louis.

Pale and trembling, while he leaned against the window-seat concealed by the folds of a curtain, Louis listened to this colloquy. As his brother and cousin left the room, he rushed past them to his own apartment, locked himself in, and did not come forth that night. Afterwards he took pains to shun the company of the heartless fair one ; and was always out alone on his walks, or in his own room where he worked every night 'till quite exhausted.

"The lad has found us out," said Carl to his pretty cousin. "What a pity !" answered Adelaide, "I should like to have brought him to reason in my own way, I confess ; such an excellent joke ! It is really a pity !"

To be continued.